

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**Wall School District
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2005-2006**

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Dates of On Site Visit: November 15 & 16, 2005

Date of Report: November 25, 2005

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by the Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
Meets Requirements	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
Needs Improvement	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
Out of Compliance	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
Not applicable	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- News releases
- Screening announcements
- File reviews
- Enrollment data
- Surveys: to parents, students, staff, administration
- Personnel training
- Comprehension plan
- School TV station announcements

- Annual application of IDEA funds
- Student referrals
- Preschool screening lists
- Parental rights brochure
- District dropout rate
- District-wide assessment results
- Exit data table H
- Content standards
- Suspension and expulsion data
- Staff certification
- Contract staff licenses
- District supervision/evaluation policy

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded the Wall School District has a referral process in place that is used to identify students at risk and employs various methods to make child find activities available to the public. The school publishes “child find” notices through the local newspaper, monthly school newsletter, school TV channel, school weekly newspaper and school board announcements. The school district conducts screenings annually for children eligible to attend Kindergarten for the upcoming school year, conducts screening sessions for children ages 0-4 and works with Birth to Three Connections continually.

The steering committee concluded the district parents and teachers are aware of the referral process. The district uses the teacher assistance team prior to referral for evaluation. Teachers are aware of the referral process as it is reviewed annually. Fifty percent of the district teachers indicate the district does not have sufficient pre-referral interventions and support available to maintain at risk students in the general education program. Parents made three referrals last year and the school made four referrals.

The steering committee concluded there are no private schools within the district. In the event a student is in an out-of-district placement the Wall School District ensures a representative participates in any and all meetings.

The steering committee concluded the district ensures progress toward state goals and performance indicators is made. District staff has completed in-service training needs assessments provided by Wall School District for the past three years. Staff members have participated in various trainings opportunities over the past several years, including the roles and responsibilities of the regular educator, classroom modifications on September 16, 2004, training by Harry Wong (August 2003), Fred Jones (August 2004), Richard Van Aker (September 2004), and June Preszler (October 2004) were provided for all paraprofessionals. The Wall School District also provided training to all staff on “Meeting the Needs of Struggling and Special Education Students”. This in-service training was based on the results of the Dakota STEP and ACT.

The steering committee determined that in the area of employees and contracted services, all personnel are appropriately supervised, fully licensed, and properly certified to work with children with disabilities,

Needs improvement

The steering committee determined that in the area of assessments driving instruction, the Wall School district needs to provide more ongoing development and training for its staff.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

Through file review and teacher interview the monitoring validates the steering committee findings for all areas identified under the provision general supervision as meeting requirement.

Needs improvement

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified by steering committee as needing improvement under the provision general supervision.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Numbers of children screened
- Preschool age
- School-age
- Data tables
- Comprehensive plan
- Parent surveys

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded the district provides free appropriate public education to all students within the district. Extended school year is addressed and provided if the team determines it is necessary, and parent surveys indicate parents are satisfied with the services provided to their children. The district meets the needs of one student through an out-of-district placement and participates in all meetings regarding this student. The Wall School District sends annual surveys to parents, current students, students who have graduated, staff, and administration to evaluate the effectiveness of the district's programs and consider adjustments as needed.

The steering committee concluded the district has policies and procedures in place to address suspension or expulsion of students with disabilities. The district has not had to implement these procedures over the past four years as no student with a disability has warranted suspension or expulsion.

Validation Results**Meets requirements**

Through file review and teacher interviews the monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that the district meets all requirements under the provision free appropriate public education. The district also has insured free appropriate public education to students in out of district placement.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for

evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Teacher file reviews
- Comprehensive plan
- Surveys
- Data tables

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded the district follows policies and procedures during the evaluation process. Prior notice/permission to evaluate was acquired before evaluations were administered in all student files. Areas to be evaluated are determined by a “team” of people including the referring person, special education teacher, parent and administrator. The district uses an informal process and team approach to review existing data before reassessing, notifying parents through a written prior notice/permission to evaluate of the school’s recommendations. District comprehensive plan procedures meet the requirements of prior notice for notifying parents if no additional evaluation data is needed. The district consistently completes the evaluation process within the required 25 day timeline.

The steering committee concluded the district follows the South Dakota eligibility criteria in determining eligibility for special education services. A multidisciplinary team report is available in all student files who qualify for special education under specific learning disability. District parents indicate test results have been used to help develop the individualized education program for their child.

Needs improvement

The steering committee concluded the district does not consistently follow district procedures during the evaluation process. Parent consent for initial evaluations was available in all but one student file. During the process of determining eligibility for a student with a specific learning disability the district needs to document all required content on the multidisciplinary report. The district does not consistently summarize functional evaluation results into a report to give to parents.

Out of compliance

The steering committee concluded the district does not consistently conduct a comprehensive evaluation. Functional and transition assessments were not consistently conducted. All tests listed on the prior notice/consent to evaluate were not consistently administered and tests were given that were not listed on the prior notice/consent for evaluation.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

Through file review the monitoring team validates several of the steering committee findings under the provision appropriate evaluation. The district has policies and procedures in place for the evaluation process, a team approach is used to determine needed evaluation including the parent, and evaluation process is consistently completed with the 25 school day timeline. The evaluation team consistently completes the multidisciplinary report for students who qualify for special education under specific learning disability and evaluation results are used to develop the individualized education plan for the student. The monitoring team determined all files reviewed had parental consent for placement and multidisciplinary team reports consistently contained all necessary content.

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:25:04. Evaluation procedures. School districts shall ensure, at a minimum, that evaluation procedures include a variety of assessment tools and strategies used to gather relevant functional and

development information about the child, including information provided by the parents that may assist in determining whether the child is a child with a disability.

ARSD 24:05:25:04.03. Determination of eligibility. Upon completing the administration of tests the school district shall provide a copy of the evaluation report and the documentation of determination of eligibility to the parent.

Through file review the monitoring team confirms the steering committee findings under the provisions appropriate evaluation. In eight of thirteen files reviewed functional assessment was either not done or not summarized into a report form to give to parents.

ARSD 24:05:25:04. Evaluation procedures. School districts shall ensure the evaluation is sufficiently comprehensive to identify all of the child's special education and related services needs, whether or not commonly linked to the disability category in which the child has been classified and tests and other evaluation materials include those tailored to assess specific areas of educational need and not merely those which are designed to provide a single general intelligence quotient.

In one of thirteen files reviewed the monitoring team determined the evaluation team did not evaluate the student in all areas of suspected disabilities. The student was on the 2004 child count under the category 560 but when the student was reevaluated in 2005 there is no evidence of the team considering the need of either further autism evaluations or bringing forth the present autism information. The student's present evaluations do support the category 525.

Issues requiring immediate attention

ARSD 24:05:22:03 Certified child

A certified child is a child in need of special education or special education and related services who has received a multidisciplinary evaluation and has an individual education program formulated and approved by a local placement committee. Documentation supporting a child's disabling condition as defined by Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act must be maintained by the school district for verification of its annual federal child count. This definition applies to all eligible children ages 3 to 21, inclusive, and to only those children under the age of 3 who are in need of prolonged assistance.

ARSD 24:05:25:04. Evaluation procedures. School districts shall ensure the evaluation is sufficiently comprehensive to identify all of the child's special education and related services needs, whether or not commonly linked to the disability category in which the child has been classified and tests and other evaluation materials include those tailored to assess specific areas of educational need and not merely those which are designed to provide a single general intelligence quotient.

The following three students identified on the 2004 child count did not have a comprehensive evaluation completed to support their disability category:

- 1) A student identified as emotionally disturbed (505) did not have behavior evaluations or functional evaluations conducted to determine if the behavior was interfering with academic performance. The evaluation team also did not bring forth any previous medical information on the prior notice/permission to evaluate and when determining eligibility to support the disability category 505.
- 2) Another student identified as mentally retarded (510) did not have a comprehensive evaluation upon turning 6 years old. No current ability, achievement, and adaptive/social evaluations were conducted to support the category 510.
- 3) The evaluation results received for a student moving to the district from another state did not meet the South Dakota eligibility criteria for the category of emotionally disturbed (505) as reported on child count.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Teacher file reviews
- Surveys
- Comprehensive plan
- Parental rights document
- Consent and prior notice forms
- Family Education Right and Privacy Act (FERPA) disclosure

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded the district follows procedural safeguards. The district consistently ensures parents are aware of their rights, confidentiality and record of access is part of every student file, graduation requirement is addressed as part of the student's individualized education program when applicable and district's request for consent document contains all required information. Parental consent was acquired for all extended school services that were provided. The district has had no complaints or requests for a due process hearing within the past five years. The steering committee concluded because the Wall School District does not have surrogate parents in the district, we meet the requirements for surrogate parents.

Needs improvement

The steering committee concluded the district must ensure all procedural safeguards are consistently followed. When students are transferring into the school district, the district must ensure all the necessary paperwork follows the student. The district needs to ensure parental consent is obtained prior to evaluation.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

Through file review the monitoring team agrees with the steering committee findings as meeting requirement under the provision of procedural safeguards. Parents are consistently informed of their rights, parental consent for extended school year is obtained, and graduation requirements are addressed at least one year prior to graduation.

Needs improvement

Through file review and special education interview the monitoring team agrees with the steering committee findings needing improvement under the provision of procedural safeguards.

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:30:15 Surrogate parents. Each school district shall establish procedures for the assignment of a surrogate parent to ensure that the rights of a child are protected if no parent can be identified and the district, after reasonable effort, cannot discover the whereabouts of a parent or if the child is a ward of the state. The district is responsible for the training and certification of surrogate parents and shall maintain a list of persons who may serve as surrogate parents.

Through interview the monitoring team determined the district does have a list of persons who may serve as a surrogate parent.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Teacher file reviews
- Surveys
- Parental rights brochure

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded the district meets requirements under the provision individualized education program. Prior notices for meetings used by the district contain all required information. Teachers receive copies of the goal and modification pages if they have a locked file cabinet. Teachers are part of the team who help write the goals, objectives and modifications for students on individualized education programs. Teachers are made aware that they have access to special education files. Student individualized education programs are reviewed annually on or before the annual review date.

The steering committee concluded the district consistently documents parent input into the individualized education program, goals and objectives link to the present level of performance and are measurable, observable and skill based and progress toward goals are reviewed and reported.

The steering committee concluded although no children exited the Part C program and began receiving services under Part B during the 2003 school year, the district comprehensive plan has procedures in place to address the transition of children to the Part B program.

Needs improvement

The steering committee concluded the district needs to make improvements under the provision of individualized education program. In the area of team membership, a regular educator was not present at all IEP meetings. In the area of transition the district needs to continue to improve communication with parents and transition age students need to be consistently invited to the individualized education program meetings. The district needs to consistently document specific skill based strengths and needs and how the students' disability affects his/her progress in the general curriculum on the present level of performance page. The district does not consistently document the frequency of needed modifications.

Out of compliance

The steering committee concluded the district is out of compliance in some areas under the provision individualized education program. In the area of transition, outside agencies are not being invited to the meeting when transition is being discussed and transition evaluations are not consistently being conducted. A course of study and a coordinated set of activities were not developed for all students at the required age.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

Through file review and staff interview the monitoring team agrees with some of the steering committee findings under the provision individualized education plan. The district teachers and parents are an active part in developing the students' individualized education program. Teachers are aware of curriculum modifications and goals and objectives for their students. The district consistently reviews and revises individualized education programs on an annual basis. The district had the required team membership at all individualized education program meetings in the files reviewed by the monitoring team. In thirteen of thirteen files reviewed the district documented modifications, stating frequency and location.

Needs improvement

Through file review the monitoring team concluded the district does not consistently address all content in the individualized education program. In ten of twelve files reviewed the district addressed justification of placement. In five of twelve files reviewed the district did not adequately address how the student's disability affects progress in the general curriculum.

Through file review and teacher interviews the monitoring team concluded the district has made great improvement in the area of transition. More transition age students are attending their IEP meetings and the district is involving more outside agencies, such as vocational rehabilitation, in the transition process. In three of the four transition-age files reviewed the district addressed transition by age 16 and transition was a coordinated set of activities. In the file which transition was not addressed the student's three year evaluation was conducted in May 2003.

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:27:01.03 Content of individualized education program. Each student's individualized education program shall include a statement of measurable annual goals, including benchmarks or short-term objectives meeting the student's needs that result from the student's disability to enable the student to be involved in and progress in the general curriculum and meeting each of the student's other educational needs that result from the student's disability.

Through file review the monitoring team concluded the district does not adequately address all content of the individualized education program. In seven of twelve files reviewed the district's goals were not observable and measurable. Goals such as "Student will improve writing technique"; "Student will comprehend grade level material"; or "Student will improve expressive communication skills" are not measurable or observable. One of twelve files had the same goal for three consecutive years even through the progress reports consistently indicated the student was making progress.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- File reviews
- Surveys
- Comprehension plan
- Data tables

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded the district meets requirements under the provision least restrictive environment. The specific special education program is developed prior to conducting placement on the continuum of least restrictive environments. Students surveyed indicate they are educated with other students their age. The district percent of students receiving services in the regular classroom with modifications is higher than the state average. Least restrictive environment considerations are also applied to preschool children with disabilities. Preschool services are provided by certified early childhood special education teacher, speech therapist, occupational therapist and physical therapist.

The steering committee concluded regular educators are equipped to assist students within the regular classroom. Teacher surveys indicated they received adequate training, information and supports to implement individualized education programs, they have opportunity to provide input into the development of the student's individualized education plan and they modify and adapt curriculum to meet the needs of students. The surveys indicate the teachers would like more time during the school week to modify curriculum, attend meetings and consult with staff.

Validation Results**Meets requirements**

Through file review and teacher interviews the monitoring team concurs with the steering committee findings under the provision least restrictive environment. Teachers indicate they are aware of student modifications and are an active part of developing student individualized education programs.